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THE HUMANIZING OF KNOWLEDGE¹

I

ANY most familiar object will suddenly turn strange when we look it in the face. As we repeat some common word or regard keenly the features of an intimate friend they are no longer what we took them to be. Were it not for our almost unlimited capacity for taking things for granted we should realize that we are encompassed with countless mysteries which might oppress our hearts beyond endurance did not custom and ineuriosity veil the depths of our careless ignorance. That I am "I" to myself and "you" to all of you, who are each of you "I" to yourself is on contemplation a perturbing circumstance. That the vibrations of my vocal cords should stir ideas in you is no easy matter to explain, and no one has yet been able to tell us why we and the earth so inerantly attract one another. But these can hardly be called mysteries to most of our fellow men, who are so inured to personality, speech and weight that they are for them scarcely observed commonplaces.

Those to whom a commonplace appears to be most extraordinary are very rare, but they are very precious, since they and they alone have made our minds. It is they who have through hundreds of thousands of years gradually enriched human thought and widened the gap that separates man from his animal congeners. Without them the mind as we know it would never have come into existence. They are the creators of human intelligence. The mass of mankind must perforce wait for some specially wide-eyed individual to point out to them what they have hitherto accepted as a matter of

¹ Address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, meeting in conjunction with the Pacific Division in Salt Lake City, June 23-24.